

Wilber Woman's Road to Recovery...continued

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that allowed her to lift the topper up and to the side to make room for her wheelchair, special hand controls that would allow her to access the gas and brake pedals, and a mobile seat that helps Lisa get into and out of her chair. Debra Jenkins and Lisa both worked to get this funded, and again VocRehab came through. Transportation was so important to Lisa not just for her job, but for her children. She found that all the running to and from her children's activities felt like a blessing, where some parents find it irritating. She could be a more active part of her family again.

Then she was set. Lisa has returned to her job at Bryan Hospital and comments, "...now I can do about anything. I'm getting back to doing what I used to do." Shore also mentioned Bryan Hospital gratefully, saying

that her co-workers and employer have offered much support and encouragement.

"It's good to have expectations and hopes, but when you don't have the money to back it up, it's hard." Lisa remembers that Debra Jenkins was wonderful to work with. By the same token, Debra thoroughly enjoyed working with Lisa, commenting, "She's very sweet...she's motivated and independent." Lisa said of VocRehab, "If it weren't for them, I wouldn't be where I am now."

Lisa's active participation and interest throughout the VocRehab process made her success story possible. Her determination enabled her to fulfill her dream of returning to a job she loves. □

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Wilber Woman's Road to Recovery

Lisa Shore's return to the operating room.

Lisa Shore wheels confidently around the operating room, preparing the surgical suite and assisting the surgeons. Many would consider her wheelchair an impediment. On the contrary, it is a necessary on-the-job tool for Lisa.

This is no normal chair. The mechanized wheelchair not only allows her to get around, it raises her to the height of the operating table.

In October of 2001, Lisa Shore was in a car accident. It changed her life, leaving her with a spinal cord injury. Her rehabilitation took place in Denver, Colorado and she decided once and for all that she would return to the job she knew and was trained for. "I had a good job, it's what I wanted to do and what I went to school for. I had the knowledge; I just needed help to physically do the job. I just needed the equipment." Her incredible determination after such a traumatic event coupled with her intelligence, paid off. She researched extensively and found exactly what she would need to return to her job in the operating room. The costs were extremely high. "The total was a huge expense for someone who has been out of work

for a while." Especially for someone raising three young children.

So when Lisa returned home to Wilber, Nebraska she went to Vocational Rehabilitation in Lincoln with her needs. There, she met Debra Jenkins, who became her VocRehab Counselor. Debra was thrilled to meet her and was so impressed by her dynamic nature. She remarked, "Instead of letting the situation control her, she took control." They worked well together, and one year after the accident, Lisa tried out the standing wheelchair. It was the perfect solution. However, because of cross contamination concerns, the standing wheelchair had to remain at the hospital and a different chair is used for her daily routine. Lisa's insurance company refused to cover the cost of the standing chair because it would not be used exclusively for her everyday activities away from work. Learning this information, VocRehab provided the funds.

The next hurdle was transportation. Lisa commutes to Lincoln daily and would need to get her chair to and from her vehicle. She drives a pick up truck with a topper. Some of the necessary modifications were handles

Osmond Business Owner's Inspiring Drive

Vocational Rehabilitation offers support for William Altwine's goal of self-employment.

Twenty years ago, William "Bill" Altwine repaired and serviced electrical motors. Several career and life changes later, Altwine finds himself owning and operating a successful business doing the same work.

After being involved in an automobile accident that injured his back, Altwine was faced with finding his way back into the workforce. He remembered how much he had enjoyed his position working with automobiles and set about finding a way to do it again. Vocational Rehabilitation was the agency he needed.

In the 1980's, Altwine operated a motor repair shop. After leaving the business toward the end of the decade he ran a trucking company. With Vocational Rehabilitation's help, he turned back to the repair business and set about establishing his own operation. Now, one year later, he works out of his rural Osmond home in a facility that VR staff helped him set up.

Because of the nature of his injury, Altwine required the installation of assistive equipment such as an overhead hoist, lift table and forklift so he could service and repair large irrigation motors. He is able to operate all of the equipment himself with little or no assistance.

"A lot of the equipment I already had, so there wasn't a lot of overhead," Altwine said, adding that his sons help with the business when they can. "So that really helps."

Setting up your own business can be confusing and stressful, but Altwine found that by working with Vocational Rehabilitation the process went smoothly.

Before considering electric motor repair Altwine went through a series of tests that focused on his capabilities and strengths in various kinds of work. After establishing his abilities, he worked with VR counselors to examine the job market and decide what the

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William Altwine

best route would be for his future career. A business consultant was also brought in to make Altwine's business set-up that much easier.

"Going through such a thing as this, being laid up for two years, there is a lot of depression and stress," he said. "Once you get established with Voc Rehab they give you the encouragement that you can do things with your disability. It lessens the stress and builds up your confidence." Bill was grateful for the support that his counselors provided, and felt reassured.

Working has always been a big part of Altwine's life. He said his family would probably classify him as a workaholic because he enjoys staying busy and doing things. For him, getting back to work was getting back to a normal way of life.

Since opening Altwine Electric Motors, Inc., he has seen a tremendous response from customers. After only one year in operation, he has seen a profit.

"My name is still out there, but I was away from it for 10 years," he said. "I had to build up a clientele, so it's working. I don't do a lot of advertising, but it seems to be doing just enough to where I keep busy."

During the summer, Altwine stays busy by doing a lot of work with irrigation engines. He also travels to conduct service calls for customers. This was made possible by purchasing a hoist for his truck that allows him to load motors into the truck bed and take them back to the shop for repairs.

Altwine gives a lot of credit to Vocational Rehabilitation and their help over the past couple of years. "If I hadn't gotten in touch with Norfolk, it's hard telling where I'd be today," he said. "If you can put somebody back in the job force that's just the finest thing you can do." □

On the Front Lines of a Colorful Career

Omaha woman achieves success at Offutt

The growing field of Graphic Design: it attracts people who are not only creative but those who pay great attention to detail and accuracy. For someone with Dyslexia, this sounds like an all too optimistic career goal. Not for 25 year old Stacy Rushton. Her dreams have been made a reality through her endless hard work and willpower. She's struggled with Dyslexia since she was diagnosed in the second grade. The learning disability took its toll both emotionally and academically.

However, Stacy has not let the Dyslexia limit her in any way. She made it through school and chose to pursue Graphic Design. Stacy successfully completed her bachelor's degree, and graduated from Northwest Missouri State University. She'd loved her internship at Offutt Air Force Base and hoped to return to a permanent civilian position. Her outlook was bright, but she wanted to make sure she was making the right decision. Kathleen O'Grady-Bell, a Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist in Omaha, was the person to help her out. Kathleen provided the necessary career planning services. They discussed Stacy's goals and skills. Kathleen met with Offutt personnel to determine what Stacy would need to be considered eligible for the graphic arts position. A grateful Stacy Rushton remembers how enabling that one-on-one attention was.

"One thing I really liked about VocRehab, was that they actually sat down and listened to me. It wasn't like it was just her (O'Grady-Bell) job, she really cared about finding you something you enjoyed doing," she said.

Those principles are extremely important to Stacy, who remembers the bleak days that came with growing up with Dyslexia. "...teachers were unsupportive," she said. Initially she was placed in special education classes. "There wasn't anywhere else to go." Ignorance about Dyslexia and its different forms

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prompted many painful experiences. Stacy ultimately refused to attend the special education classes and made it through school with the help of a good friend. They studied together every night following her school day.

With high school over, Stacy had college to think about. She wanted to go, was determined to go, and so she did. College was difficult for her until an observant professor caught on. He noticed that she answered questions correctly when they were put to her verbally, but that she could not pass her written exams. The learning disability department at Northwest Missouri State University re-evaluated Stacy and helped her with her studies.

She is now successfully employed at Offutt Air Force Base.

"It goes by very quickly," she said. "I love my job, I love the people I work with and they're very supportive."

The work challenges Stacy, and she enjoys a challenge. She feels that overcoming difficult work methods, she becomes that much stronger. She uses a proofreader to double check her work and a reader at times as she types. Stacy is also color sensitive, meaning that she cannot read print in certain colors. She has discovered however, that she can read anything in blue. Solution? A blue transparency that she can place over any document. No other equipment is required for Stacy to do her job, and she comments, "...the older you are, the more compensations you develop for Dyslexia." Stacy Rushton has successfully overcome her limitations. She works hard and has achieved so much. Stacy has made sure that her desires are within reach, simply by stretching herself, with a little help from Vocational Rehabilitation.

Stacy emphasized, "I want to do the work, that's what I was hired to do. It's a team effort and I'm a team player." □